



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement in Response to Ambassador Miroslav Lajcak, Personal Representative of EU HIREP for Montenegro**

As delivered by Deputy Representative Kyle Scott  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
February 2, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Lajcak, the United States welcomes your appointment by European Union High Representative Javier Solana to serve as his personal envoy for Montenegro. Facilitating the talks that will set the rules for Montenegro's expected referendum on independence is an important task.

Mr. Ambassador, the report you have just given us was excellent, and certainly timely, reflecting your commitment to helping the Montenegrins agree on rules that meet international standards. The challenge is great, but the goal that you articulated is one we completely support: agreed rules that will ensure a fair and free referendum reflecting the clear will of the Montenegrin electorate. In this respect, the United States strongly supports a role for ODIHR and the OSCE in helping to monitor the conduct of the referendum.

As you know, few issues are more momentous than those that deal with the fundamental question of a country's political future and identity. Few have more potential to inflame political emotions and rhetoric than the question of independence.

Regardless of the outcome, the ability of the people of Montenegro and their political leadership to handle this deeply emotional issue in an open, transparent and democratic fashion will speak volumes about their readiness to integrate into Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Ultimately, Mr. Chairman, the people of Montenegro will succeed if they put faith in themselves and the democratic process. This will require the government and the opposition to negotiate with each other in good faith, and to reject ultimatums and negative and inflammatory rhetoric.

Allow me to end, Mr. Chairman, by noting how this referendum fits into broader issues we discuss in this body. The outcome of referenda such as this can be unpredictable; the will of the people may not reflect one country or another's preferred result. However, the democratic goals of this organization stand for the process, not the outcome per se.

In the short term, a democracy can bring with it uncertainty and change, but in the long term it breeds stability and peace. I hope the people and political leadership of Montenegro will bear this in mind as they work with one another and Ambassador Lajcak to devise rules that will ensure a free and fair referendum and which will reflect the clear will of the Montenegrin electorate.

Lastly, as Ambassador Lajcak facilitates Montenegrin leaders' negotiations on referendum modalities, we encourage OSCE members to prompt both republics to begin talks that look beyond the ballot. The process of Montenegrin secession or strengthening the State Union will be a complex undertaking during a challenging year for the Western Balkans. Belgrade and Podgorica should begin a dialogue on preparations for either outcome in order to ensure a stable post-referendum transition.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.